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ABSTRACT

A seven-member research team conducted participant observer field research at the College Park campus of the University of Maryland during the October 15th, 1969, moratorium in order to obtain an account of what transpired on the campus as a whole. The following eight events or places were covered by the researchers: teach-in, classroom area, vending machine area, student union, residence hall, any small gathering, any large gathering, and one "wild card" event. The campus was relatively involved in the moratorium and related activities, although the general atmosphere remained quiet and activities unrelated to the moratorium were less common than usual. Valuable experience was gained in both the preparation and execution of the participant observer technique. (SW)

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THE VIETNAM MORATORIUM (OCT. 15, 1969):
WHAT HAPPENED ON ONE CAMPUS

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RESEARCH REPORT #1-70
Counseling Center
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SUMMARY

A seven-member research team conducted participant observer field research at the University of Maryland campus at College Park during the October 15th, 1969 Moratorium on the Vietnam war. The purpose of the research was to obtain an account of what transpired on the campus as a whole. Results indicated that the campus was relatively involved in the Moratorium and related activities, although the general atmosphere remained quiet and activities unrelated to the Moratorium were less common than usual. The use of field observation was viewed as an often neglected potentially useful tool in gathering behavioral data.

INTRODUCTION

Most researchers wait until after an important event has ended before beginning their study. Such delays allow time in which to prepare and administer precise data-retrieval instruments such as tests, questionnaires, and structured interviews. However, in the case of relatively short-lived events involving collective behavior, much potentially valuable data is lost by not conducting research while the event is taking place.

A survey of sociological literature relating to research on collective behavior in short-lived events indicates that almost all of it is begun only upon the event's completion. Yet as Smelser (1963) points out, collective behavior "affords a peculiar kind of laboratory in which we are able to study directly certain components of behavior which usually lie dormant." Because of the fact that collective behavior is viewed as spontaneous and fickle, hence not easily analyzed nor experimentally controlled, there has been a paucity of investigation of any kind in this regard. Strauss (1947) noted that what investigations there had been had usually either been reports from persons who by coincidence were on the scene, or ex post facto reports; Smelser corroborates this in his 1963 book.

The solution, both explicit and implicit, in all the writings of these investigators is simple to state, yet difficult to achieve: effective field research. In preparing to study the October 15th, 1969 Moratorium on the war at the University of Maryland's College Park campus, methods involving questionnaires, interviews, and stratified time-samplings were considered but rejected. Employing research tools such as these might have interfered with accurate data collection during a short-lived event such as the Mora-

torium, because the participants' normal activities would have been interrupted. In order to avoid interruptions, maintain research anonymity, and obtain a maximum amount of data, the participant observer technique was chosen. Although the problem of the "personal equation" (i.e., the observer's subjective sets and biases combined with the tendency to selectively perceive what is being researched) is almost inevitable when conducting any sort of observational field research, Lazarsfeld (1968) states that the relation between manifest observations and intended classifications is a probabilistic one. That is, it is highly unlikely that a large number of observer biases will occur in the same direction by chance for a given event when the persons being observed have not changed their basic positions.

The need for a certain degree of quantification in summarizing observational data is stressed by Lazarsfeld. Every kind of reaction is possible, notes Lazarsfeld, hence what seems obvious to one observer may not be the case nor obvious to anyone else. Thus interobserver reliability is an important consideration in field research.

The present study is not the only one which has been conducted in the Washington, D.C., area on student peace demonstrations. Soloman and Fishman (1964) report that in the demonstrations they studied student participants usually had no well-formed political ideology. These demonstrators tended to combine idealism and protest via an expressed and implied "striving for purity." The authors did not employ an observer-oriented research methodology, however, but used a survey and in-depth interviews. They did conduct a follow-up study 18 months later, which indicated among other things that many of the original demonstrators had developed interests in other causes.

The Moratorium research conducted at the University of Maryland did not begin with an hypothesis. Rather, it was organized around a purpose,

that being to effectively gather data as to what took place on October 15th on one campus.

METHOD

Instrument: The basic data-collection tool consisted of a notebook with an unmarked cover. A page containing specific instructions was followed by a list of eight events (or places) which each researcher was to cover at the University of Maryland while the Moratorium was taking place. The eight events came under the following headings:

- (1) Teach-In (a different area was listed for each researcher)
- (2) Classroom area (a different area was assigned each researcher)
- (3) Vending machine area (a different area was assigned each researcher)
- (4) Student Union
- (5) Residence hall (a different residence hall was assigned each researcher, except one who covered the fraternities)
- (6) Any small ($N < 25$) gathering
- (7) Any large ($N > 25$) gathering
- (8) One "wild card" event

Aside from the Teach-In, the only differentiation as to the time of day at which an event was to be observed was "a.m." for three of the notebooks, and "p.m." for the remaining four.

The objectives of data-collection were the same for each of the eight events, and specific instructions for the 12 objectives were listed on page three. A map of the campus constituted page four, and was included for the convenience of the researcher.

The notebook contained eight data-collection sheets, one for each event. Each sheet was identical, and had spaces for data collected on each of the 12 objectives, which were as follows:

- A. Structure of the event, to be recorded on a five-point

continuum with poles at 1 and 5 labeled "informal, unorganized" and "formal, organized," respectively.

- B. Mood of the event's participants, to be recorded on a five-point continuum with poles at 1 and 5 labeled "quiet, passive" and "violent, active," respectively.
- C. Crowd participation, to be recorded on a five-point continuum with poles at 1 and 5 labeled "no response" and "riot," respectively.
- D. Number of participants, to be recorded on a scale which requires the researcher to estimate to the nearest 25 persons up to a total of 100 persons, and to the nearest 100 persons beyond that.
- E. Categories of participants, to be recorded by means of check-marks identifying the presence (not the specific number) of groups labeled "students," "student leaders," "University of Maryland faculty," "University of Maryland administration," and "others."
- F. Expressed modal (most frequently mentioned) value orientation, and extent of agreement thereof, recorded by means of a descriptive statement.
- G. Descriptive statements relating what took place while the observer was there.
- H. Frequency of usage of the key words "Vietnam," "war," and "peace," to be recorded using tally notation for a timed five-minute interval.
- I. Descriptive statements covering any observed trends in clothing, use of slogans, behavior, etc.
- J. Observed group function (not necessarily the intended or labeled function), to be recorded by means of check-marks in spaces labeled "information dissemination," "information exchange," "social interaction," "observation of others," "violent confrontation," "protest," "peaceful demonstration," "organizing an activity," "inactivity," and "other."
- K. Estimated percentage of active (either vocally or behaviorally) participants in the event.
- L. Degree to which the event is related to the Vietnam war, to be recorded on a five-point continuum with poles at 1 and 5 labeled "totally related" and "not related," respectively.

Procedures: The research team consisted of seven graduate research assistants from the University Counseling Center. The three "a.m." and four "p.m."

notebooks were randomly distributed among these participant observers on October 14th. All procedures were discussed with all observers to insure some reliability of reporting, although no reliability coefficients were determined.

In keeping with a format which allowed each observer to remain flexible in his collection of data, and participate in the events which he was covering as well, time was a governing factor in only three ways: (1) A minimum of 15 minutes was spent at each event, (2) the exact arrival and departure times from each event were recorded, and (3) all eight events were observed during the assigned half of the day. In instances where more time was needed in which to complete the eight observations, a portion of the other half of the day was used.

Researchers who happened to see other researchers while collecting data were not allowed to compare notes, nor participate in events together. Formal interviews were not elicited from anyone. However, information gained from spontaneous, informal conversations was incorporated into the data, as this fit in with the participant observer concept. The recording of data at a crowded event was done as if notes were being taken. At a small event it was recorded in whatever way was necessary to remain inconspicuous, even if the researchers had to leave the scene. If for some reason no data were available on a given objective, a note to that effect was included on the appropriate data sheet.

The fact that nothing was happening or no one was present at a given location was included as relevant data. As participant observers it was not only imperative to record activity but inactivity as well, in order to present an accurate picture of the entire campus.

RESULTS

In presenting the results it is meaningful to retain the eight event

categories outlined above. Inter-event generalizations of a qualitative nature will be found in the discussion section, but inter-event quantitative generalizations are not warranted. Lazarsfeld (1968) has emphasized the importance of applying quantitative measures to any data which has been gathered before drawing conclusions, especially if it is in the form of descriptive statements. Therefore, the open-ended responses obtained for research objectives "F," "G," and "I" have been categorized.

This categorization was done on the basis of the frequency of usage of key phrases. In order to establish a high degree of reliability in their selection, the key phrases listed here were categorized independently from the completed data-collection sheets by three persons who based their decisions on word content only. Two of the three persons were observers in the study. Although most observers expressed a given observation in different ways, phrases were counted as being equivalent only if they were categorized under the same key phrase heading by all three persons. Ambiguous phrases were not counted. The key phrase headings themselves were derived prior to examining the data, making sure all possible data outcomes were covered. Although sentences were broken down into phrases, no phrase was included in more than one category. If an observer repeated a phrase when describing a given objective at an event, it was only counted once.

Tables

A. Structure (1=informal, unorganized; 5=formal, organized)

Event	Median	Mode	Range
Teach-In	5	5	5
Classroom areas	1	1	1-5
Vending machine areas	1	1	1
Student Union	1	1	1-2
Residence halls	1	1	1
Small gatherings	1	1	1
Large gatherings	4	4	3-5
"Wild cards"	1	1	1-4

B. Mood (1=quiet, passive; 5=violent, active)

Event	Median	Mode	Range
Teach-In	2	2	1-4
Classroom areas	1	1	1-3
Vending machine areas	1	1	1-2
Student Union	2	2	1-3
Residence halls	1	1	1-3
Small gatherings	2	1,2	1-3
Large gatherings	2	2	1-4
"Wild cards"	2-3	2	2-5

C. Crowd participation (1=no response; 5=riot)

Event	Median	Mode	Range
Teach-In	2	2	2-3
Classroom areas	1	1	1-3
Vending machine areas	1	1	1-3
Student Union	2	1,2	1-3
Residence halls	1	1	1-2
Small gatherings	2-3	2,3	1-4
Large gatherings	3	3	1-3
"Wild cards"	3	3	2-4

D. Number of participants

Event	Median Category	Modal Category	Range
Teach-In	500+	500+	300-500+
Classroom areas	0-25	0-25	0-75
Vending machine areas	(0-25)	(0-25)	0-50
Student Union	26-50	0-25	0-300
Residence halls	0-25	0-25	0-50
Small gatherings	0-25	0-25	0-25
Large gatherings	26-50	26-50	26-300
"Wild cards"	0-25	0-25	0-50

Tables (continued)

E. Categories of participants

Event (no. & name)	Mode	Range
(1) Teach-In	students	students, student leaders, faculty administration, others
(2) Classroom areas	students	students, faculty, administration, others
(3) Vending machine areas	students	students, faculty, others
(4) Student Union	students	students, student leaders, faculty
(5) Residence halls	students	students, faculty, others
(6) Small gatherings	students	students
(7) Large gatherings	students	students, student leaders, faculty, others
(8) "Wild cards"	students	students, student leaders, faculty, others

F. Expressed modal value orientation*

Key Phrases	Events							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
General discussion of war	2			1			2	
Desire to end war	3					1	2	1
Disinterest in war								1
Agreement with Moratorium	1	1			1	2		2
Disagreement with Moratorium		1	1	1				1
Interest in Moratorium				2				1
Disinterest in Moratorium				2	3	1		
Morat'm. won't accomp. objectives		1					1	
No mention of Moratorium			1					
Disagrees with Nixon's policies							1	
Withdrawal of troops	2							
Gradual withdrawal of troops						1		
Plan to attend Washington rally							1	1
Work on peace-related projects							2	
Interest in Vietnam (general)								1
Disagree with military affairs in U.S.	2							
State of affairs in U.S. bad	1							
Concern with classwork/homework		2	2	1		1		
Concern with World Series			1	1	1		1	1
Trend toward active behavior	1							
Trend toward quiet, calm behavior	5				2			
"Small talk"	1		1			1		
No trends observed			1	1				

*Tabled values are frequencies of comments by all observers on objective F

G. Description of what took place*

Key Phrases	Events							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
General discussion of war	3	1	1	2			3	
Agreement with Moratorium	1	1		1				
Disagreement with Moratorium							1	
Interest in Moratorium			1	1	1	2	1	
Disinterest in Moratorium				2		1		
Morat'm. won't accomp. its objectives		1						
Univ. should support Morat'm.	1							
Agreement with Nixon's policies				1				
Disagree with Nixon's policies	2							
Plan to attend Washington rally							1	1
Work on peace-related projects							2	1
Interest in Vietnam (general)								1
Disagree with military affairs in U.S.	1							
Concern with classwork/homework		4	3	1	1	3		1
Concern with World Series		1	1	1	4	1		
Trend toward peace insignias				1				
Trend toward active behavior	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Trend toward quiet, calm behavior	3	1	1		1	2	1	
Participation in prayers	2							
Activities as usual				3				
"Small talk"	2	1	4	2	1	2		1

*Tabled values are frequencies of comments by all observers on objective G

H. Frequency of key words' usage

Key Words		Events							
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
"Vietnam":	mode	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
	range	0-10	0-4	0-2	0-10	0-1	0-46	0-8	0-4
"War":	mode	1	0	0	0	0	0	0,6	1
	range	0-15	0-9	0-1	0-4	0-3	0-12	0-6	0-2
"Peace":	mode	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,1
	range	0-6	0-2	0	0-2	0	0-7	0-100	0-1

I. Description of trends*

Trends	Events							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Trend toward peace symbols	7	1			1	2	1	1
Trend away from peace symbols		1	1					
Trend toward empty rooms, bldgs.		4			4			
Trend toward similar cloth, styles	5	3	1	3	2	3	5	3
Trend toward quiet, calm behavior						1	1	
Trend toward active behavior	1	1						1
Concern with classwork/homework		1			1			
Work on peace-related projects								1
No trends observed		2	4	4	2	2		1

*Tabled values are frequencies of comments by all observance on objective I

J. Observed group function*

Function	Events							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Information dissemination	4	3	0	1	0	0	1	2
Information exchange	2	1	3	2	1	2	3	1
Social interaction	3	3	6	6	3	6	2	3
Observation of others	3	0	0	0	1	2	1	0
Violent confrontation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Protest	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Peaceful demonstration	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Organizing an activity	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Inactivity	0	1	3	2	3	1	0	0
Other	0	1	1	1	3	2	1	1

*Tabled values are frequencies of all observances checking each function

K. Estimated percentage of active participants

Event	Modal %	Range of %'s
Teach-in	1	1-90
Classroom areas	100	1-100
Vending machine areas	50	0-100
Student Union	50	10-50
Residence halls	0	0-100
Small gatherings	100	0-100
Large gatherings	10,100	10-100
"Wild cards"	75	50-100

L. Degree to which event was related to Vietnam war

Event	Median	Mode	Range
Teach-in	1	1	1-2
Classroom areas	5	5	1-5
Vending machine areas	5	5	4-5
Student Union	4-5	5	1-5
Residence halls	5	5	4-5
Small gatherings	2	2,5	1-5
Large gatherings	1	1	1-4
"Wild cards"	1	1	1-5

(1=totally related; 5=not related)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The detailed tables of results which have been presented objective-by objective herein are self-explanatory. The first part of this discussion serves to bring forth and combine the highlights for each event in turn. As previously stressed, all inter-event generalizations are qualitative, owing to the nature of the participant observer research methodology.

It is apparent that the Teach-In remained formally organized throughout its duration (approximately six hours). The spectators were quiet, with crowd participation slight. The fact that the range for the estimated percentages of active participants ran from 1 to 90% is probably due to some observers considering only the formal speakers, whereas others include those applauding. The speeches emphasized ending the war, and although no one phrase predominated, the absence of all phrases which in any way supported the war is significant. The frequency in the trend toward peace symbols is the highest frequency found anywhere in the data. (Table I.) The frequency of key word usage yielded little information (Table H). The time sampled (5 minutes) was likely insufficient to make this exercise useful.

The data indicate that the classroom areas were generally quiet on October 15th. What classes there were were not heavily attended, and although the war and the Moratorium were mentioned, they did not appear to be particularly popular topics of conversation. In general, activity in the classroom areas did not relate to the war.

Persons obtaining food in the various campus vending machine areas generally expressed no more interest in the Moratorium than in other topics of conversation. These areas were rather quiet, the principle observed

function being that of social interaction.

Although the usual activities in the Student Union also tended toward the quiet side, the data indicate large fluctuations in the number of people there at different times during the day. A look at Tables "F" and "G" shows that topics dealing with the war and the Moratorium prevailed at the Union (Event 4), although it cannot be ascertained which viewpoint predominated. The main observed function was that of social interaction.

The residence halls and fraternities were very quiet, with very few people even seen. The data reveal a relatively high interest in the World Series. During the afternoon the game was on both television and radio. Three observers reported disinterest in the Moratorium; in general, those activities observed in the residence halls were not related to the war.

The small gatherings which were reported during the day were comprised entirely of students. Those conversations which were heard for the most part dealt with war-related topics, the data indicating a slight trend along pro-moratorium lines. Discussions of classwork was the other predominant topic. The chief observed function was again social interaction. It can be concluded that these fairly responsive groups were somewhat oriented toward the Moratorium.

In considering the large gatherings which were encountered on October 15th, it is evident that they were not only well-organized and fairly responsive, but definitely Moratorium-oriented in both functions and conversations. This includes work being done on peace-related projects and some interest in attending the Washington rally which was held on the evening of October 15th. The same overview can be given for the "wild card" events which were observed, although these tended to be smaller and unorganized.

The view of the University of Maryland campus as a whole during the day of October 15th is clear. Things in general were at least as quiet as usual, and probably moreso. Although persons in the classrooms, vending areas, and residence halls did not exhibit any appreciable interest in the activities surrounding the Moratorium, there was a good deal of concern shown at the Teach-In, and to somewhat lesser extents at the Student Union and the small gatherings. Data on the large gatherings and "wild card" events (the latter being any activity the participant observer chose to attend) strongly indicate that interest in the war was widespread.

Upon completion of the data collection, a session was held involving all seven participant observers. A major criticism was that the data collection sheets were too constraining. This problem remains unresolved, since in order to provide essential elements of quantification to the results, some consistency in the format was needed.

As it was, objectives "F", "G", and "I" were the only ones requiring descriptive statements as data responses. The grammatical formats employed by the seven observers were quite varied, hence key phrase categorization was rather difficult. In addition, when a lack of activity was observed at a given event, some observers would leave the space for objective "G" blank, but others would describe the lack of activity. Since it is impossible to accurately categorize blanks these were omitted from the final results. Fortunately, there were only two brief remarks which could not be categorized, owing to their ambiguity.

Another problem was that one statement on the data sheet was sometimes used to stand for several conversations which were heard dealing with one topic. In compiling results such ratings were treated, the same

as single conversations noted.

These problems with methodology are relatively insignificant when analyzing the positive gains of the research. The primary goal was that of describing in detail what occurred at the University of Maryland as a whole, and this was successfully accomplished. In addition to overcoming some of the difficulties which have kept many other researchers from attempting on-the-spot field research, valuable experience in both the preparation and execution of this participant observer technique was gained. In an attempt to obtain still more information concerning what transpires in an important event such as this, a study of the November 13-15 Moratorium will also be conducted.

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